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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Written Statement submitted by Friends World Committee for Consultation Society of Friends (Quakers), a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[13 March 1996]

1. At its fifty-first session, the Commission on Human Rights adopted, without a vote, resolution 1995/88 entitled "Human rights and mass exoduses". 1/ This resolution recognizes the important link between mass exoduses of refugees and displaced persons and the gross violation of human rights. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees again emphasized in her statement to the Commission, human rights concerns go to the essence of the cause of refugee movements, as well as to the precepts of refugee protection and the solution of refugee problems.

2. The resolution sought to address this problem by giving added priority to the systematization of information collection. In so doing, it invites the various United Nations human rights mechanisms (i.e. special rapporteurs, special representatives, working groups, treaty bodies) to forward information

on mass exoduses to the High Commissioner for Human Rights for appropriate action. The High Commissioner is requested to address these situations through "emergency preparedness and response mechanisms, including information-sharing, the provision of technical advice, expertise and cooperation".

3. Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers) agrees with the attempt to provide sharper focus to information collection. The High Commissioner for Human Rights should be seen as the focal point for the human rights aspects of forced displacement. Resolution 1995/88 effectively makes him the focal point for information gathering. In this regard, he is best placed to prepare reports pursuant to future resolutions on human rights and mass exoduses.

4. There is also a need to collect information in a systematic manner, especially so-called early warning information. This can be done by putting more resources into field offices and operations which provide an impartial presence for monitoring human rights. Indeed, resolution 1995/88 called on the Secretary-General to allocate the necessary resources for ensuring effective action in this regard (i.e. para. 9).

5. The General Assembly, in resolution 50/182 of 11 December 1995, requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to "pay attention to situations that cause or threaten to cause mass exoduses" in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In this regard, both the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees should be requested to address the Commission on human rights and mass exoduses, in particular to highlight those situations which cause or threaten to cause mass exoduses.

6. The resolution on human rights and mass exoduses has for many years called upon all States to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to refrain from denying these because of nationality, ethnicity, race, religion or language. As a follow-up to the Beijing Declaration, and in the light of the recognition in resolution 1995/88 that women are vulnerable to gender-based discrimination and gender-specific violence and exploitation, we urge that gender be added to this list.

7. To further address the specific needs related to refugee women, in light of the need for "durable solutions", there should be a clear recognition of the right to adequate health care, food, housing and a safe and healthy environment. The right to freedom of movement as articulated by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (resolution 1994/24) should also be reaffirmed.

8. Friends World Committee for Consultation urges the Commission on Human Rights to:

(a) Encourage a sharper focus for information collection on the human rights aspects of mass exoduses and designate the High Commissioner for Human Rights as the focal point within the United Nations system for information collection on the human rights aspects of forced displacement;

(b) Request the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare reports pursuant to future resolutions on "Human rights and mass exoduses";

(c) Recommend that significant resources be allocated to collecting information on the human rights aspects of mass exoduses in a systematic manner; and specifically recommend that more resources are put into field offices and operations which provide an impartial presence for monitoring human rights;

(d) Request the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees to address the Commission on human rights and mass exoduses, in particular to highlight those situations which cause or threaten to cause mass exoduses;

(e) Call upon all States to refrain from denying human rights and fundamental freedoms because of gender;

(f) Recognize that specific needs of refugee women can best be met by recognizing the right to adequate health care, food, housing and a safe and healthy environment;

(g) Reaffirm the right to freedom of movement as articulated by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (resolution 1994/24).

Notes

1/ Introduced by Canada, co-sponsored by Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Benin, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.